

CONSIDERING A ROADSIDE MARKET?

Why do you want to develop a roadside market? Who will you be producing to? Will they be local or will they be passers-by? Are you creating a new roadside market or renovating an old one? Where will your roadside market be located? How will your inventory reflect your customers?

These are some of the questions which you should ask yourself before undertaking the task of developing a successful roadside market. Planning is crucial. If your planning is poor, you can ruin a profit opportunity. Plan and prepare before you begin your roadside market. Plan! Plan! Plan! Flexibility is the key!

Many options are available for the prospective market. Some farmers often like to incorporate a market directly on their farm. This is fine if you are located where people can find you. If not, you must be creative in getting potential customers to your market.

As you take the first steps in planning a market, ask yourself all of these questions and more. Investigate all sign laws, capital investment needs, consumer trends, government regulations, and other pertinent information before you begin operation.

LOCATING THE MARKET

Simply building a structure does not ensure success. You must be able to establish your market on customer base, ability to get them to stop and shop, and the ability for them to return in the future.

Major factors in market design and location are area traffic flow, location of other markets and/or grocery stores, zoning laws, government regulations, and space for expansion. Parking for customers is also another factor that plays a vital role in determining market location.

Traffic flow is one of the most important factors. Can you locate on a major road? Will you have to locate off of a long dirt road if you are on a farm? Try to locate in an accessible location either on or near a major roadway.

Where are you located in terms of population centers? If you are in a rural area, then your market design, size, and other factors will be different than in a metropolitan area. You must study demographics and see if your area can support a full time market. If not, can it support a seasonal market, or is there enough traffic to even consider this venture?

Zoning planning and other government regulations must be factored into your market location. City, state, and county laws vary and are very different from metropolitan zoning laws. Signs have restrictions, and the highway department also has regulations on construction that you will need to investigate. You do not want to have to redesign after you have already begun constructing your roadside market.

Space for expansion is another factor to consider. Make sure that the location you choose will allow for expansion opportunities without hindering access or parking facilities. You also do not want to invade other people's property during expansion.

Parking is very important for the design of a roadside market. Ample parking must be provided near the checkout area. Paved parking is best, and all lots must be well kept. Separate entrances and exits direct traffic flow well. If you are operating at night, outside lighting is necessary. Also, if you live far away from your market and do not operate at night, you might want to consider installing outside lights to help avoid vandals and crime.

DESIGNING THE MARKET

Once you have determined where to locate your market, the structural design of the market must be developed. When designing your market keep the following points in mind:

- You must like the building that you develop. Be sure that you are satisfied with its style and function.
- Incorporate a style that is typical for your community and meets your needs. There is no need to create a fancy, expensive market.
- The items you intend to sell will determine your electrical needs for coolers, cull racks, and total electrical requirements. Check with your insurance company because certain designs and equipment will increase insurance costs dramatically.
- Give strong consideration to interior lighting. Use natural light when possible. Incandescent bulbs are your second choice. If you must utilize fluorescent lightening, be sure to buy color corrected bulbs. Use of spot lighting is very effective.
- Provide plenty of storage space within the facility. Allow room for expansion and visualize the flow of traffic in the market to make sure the design will function well.
- Determine the budget and financing for the facility. Can you build this yourself? Should you have a partner? What type of load will be best? Always budget for at least one and one half times your projected building cost for overruns, potential design changes, and other additions and unexpected costs.

BUILDING MARKET IMAGE, PRODUCT LINE AND MARKETING TECHNIQUES

Every marketing tool that you utilize is a reflection of you to your customer. The customer must be the main focus in all of your marketing endeavors, for without the customer, there is no business.

1. Market Research

- a. What are you selling? A need, a want, an experience?
- b. Can your area adequately support the type of market and products that you will have available?
- c. You must know your area competition.
- d. Develop a business plan for 1 year, 5 years, and 10 years.

2. Product Development

- a. Can you offer a unique product, service, or value?
- b. Study demographics. Know who your customers are and let them tell you what products will do best in your area. Focus products on age groups and subgroups.
- c. Develop the shopping experience.
 - i. Heavy use of themes
 - ii. Seasonal promotions
 - iii. Educational experience
 - iv. School tours
 - v. Promote the farm experience

3. Marketing

Keep in mind that most products that are for sale at direct markets are readily available at local supermarkets. You must give the customer and value and a reason to go out of his or her way to visit your market. The value can be better service, fresher product, more knowledge about products, or any array of “perceived value”.

A good definition of marketing activities are all those associated with identifying the particular wants and needs of a target market of customers, and then going

about satisfying those customers better than the competitors. You, as a business person, must seek repeat business and not just a one time sale.

Developing free advertising through your local media can be very valuable in gaining local name recognition. Send out press releases if you have something especial planned. Become an “expert” that your local media will contact when fruits and vegetables are of consumer interest. Word of mouth is the best type of free advertising.

Spend all paid advertising dollars wisely. Use simple surveys or a guest register to develop a mailing list. Develop billboards, posters, brochures, and other items that focus on what you mean to the customer. Coupons in local newspapers or other publications and local advertisement all work well. Remember to have a goal in mind of what you expect to accomplish with your advertising dollar.

4. Signage

The first image many customers will relate to your business is the signage you utilize. The following points should be helpful in developing signs:

- a. Use clear signage
- b. Coordinate color schemes
- c. Tell people what you do
- d. Do not put too much information in too little space
- e. Maintain the same style on all signs leading to your market. Do not confuse the customer.
- f. Have freshly painted signs

Note: It is very important to check local regulations on sign usage before you spend money. Permits are required in many areas and there are limits on how many signs may be utilized and where they may be located on some road systems

Roadside Market Checklist

CUSTOMER	YES	NO
1. Do you have products for local customers?		
2. Do you have products for non-local customers?		
3. Have you made a customer survey?		
4. Do you have a strategy to develop new customers?		
5. Are your customers educated in agriculture?		
IMAGE/MARKETING/SIGNAGE	YES	NO
1. Does the roadside market have a good first impression?		
2. Is it clean, neat, and organized?		
3. Is there good landscaping (freshly cut flowers, etc)?		
4. Is it located in a farm atmosphere?		
5. Does your roadside market have a logo, t-shirts, signs, brochures?		
6. Are the signs clear, large, freshly painted or new?		
7. Is the sign portable?		
8. Have you talked with the highway department and government about regulations?		
EXTERIOR	YES	NO
1. Is the roadside market located near traffic flow?		
2. Is the parking lot a good size?		
3. Is the roadside market visible from the road?		
4. Are there marked spots or parking boundaries?		
5. Are there clear entrances and exits?		
6. Will parked cars be in the way of displays?		
7. Do you have employees to help handle customers' goods?		
8. Is the building new and attractive?		
9. Can the building be expanded?		

10. Is the market located on the right side of the road coming into town?

11. Is the closest town within a few miles of your market?

INTERIOR

YES

NO

1. Are the aisles wide?
2. Are the doors wide?
3. Do the displays have dead spots?
4. Are high demand products located near the preparation or storage room?
5. Are the impulse items at the checkout counter?
6. Can customers see over displays?
7. Is there handicap access?
8. Will you provide baskets or carts for customers?
9. Are floors level and smooth?
10. Is checkout in an L-shape?
11. Do you have a convenient cash register?

EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

YES

NO

1. Is there storage for overnight perishable items?
2. Is it an easy to clean facility?
3. Are scales available to customers?
4. Is there color contrast?
5. Is there a variety of products?
6. Are products grouped logically?
7. Are recipes located nearby produce?
8. Is taste testing available to customers?
9. Is lighting available?
10. Do you have seasonal items?

PACKAGING

YES

NO

1. Is packaging presented well?
2. Does it enhance the products?
3. Are there distinct color combinations?
4. Are products effectively packaged?
5. Are there standard sized containers?
6. Does the package feature your logo?

PRICING

YES

NO

1. Are the prices marked uniformly and clearly?
2. Are they fair and competitive?
3. Are prices determined by cost of production?
4. Are the marked down for distressed produce?
5. Do you have point of purchase cards?

PERSONNEL

YES

NO

1. Are your sales people courteous, cheerful, and professional?
2. Are your sales people well informed about products?
3. Are the enthusiastic?
4. Are they helpful and not overbearing?
5. Do they know how to handle complaints?

MISCELLANEOUS

YES

NO

1. Will you provide produce that is not available in grocery stores?
2. Will you be open year-round?
3. Will you keep records of produce, sales, and customers?
4. Will you be using family as your employees?
5. Will your family support you in this endeavor?
6. Do you enjoy working with the public?
7. Are you available to open your stand seven days a week?
8. Will you be able to operate a stand if you are maintaining a farm also?
9. Will your insurance cover a roadside market?
10. Will you use season extenders when you are not in season?
11. Will you take care of pests?
12. Will you attend special events to advertise your market?
13. Will you analyze competition annually?
14. Will you critique advertising strategy annually and determine what works?